

## Ten Questions with... Holly Morris

Holly Morris is chairwoman of Duxbury's Community Preservation Committee, which will be bringing a number of articles to Town Meeting next month.

1) The Community Preservation Committee is asking voters to approve \$1 million for the purchase of 106 acres at Camp Wing. What are the major benefits? The purchase of the Camp Wing land is important because it links conservation land that the town currently owns and will protect over two miles of riparian corridor. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife regards a portion of the land as Priority Habitat for Rare Species and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife lists the South River as an important wetland. For these very reasons Camp Wing has been targeted for protection for over four decades. In addition, three acres of upland will be set aside as inventory for affordable housing.



2) Plans call for setting aside three acres for housing. How will that work and who will own the property? Land purchased with CPA money becomes town owned land, as was the land on Congress Street and the Deiano farm which were purchased in part for community housing. If the Camp Wing land is acquired by the town then the Local Housing Partnership, with the assistance of Christine Stickney, the planning board director, will further investigate the options and issue RFPs to solicit interest. A number of options could be entertained, such as a group home or the development of two structures, possibly duplexes, with a total of eight bedrooms.

3) What is the average annual CPA assessment for a homeowner? The mean CPA tax surcharge for FY 2007 is \$166.95.

4) Can you give us a brief update on two recent CPC projects: the O'Neil Farm ... Much has been happening at the farm. The O'Neil Farm is now the Historic O'Neil Farm, Inc., a non-profit corporation run by a nine member board of directors, with Carl O'Neil as the board president. A walking trail with interpretive signs off Autumn Avenue has been constructed using a Fields Pond Foundation grant and many volunteers. Two Eagle Scout projects completed the trail with a bridge at Hall's Brook and a visitor parking lot on Autumn Avenue. A grant from the Massachusetts Farm Viability program resulted in

the completion of a Phase I Business Plan. Application for a Phase II Business Plan has been submitted. A recent \$25,000 grant from the Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation Greenways Program will result in a second one mile walking trail next year. In September 2007, the first of many fun-filled Historic O'Neil Farm Days was held. The first farm newsletter was published and mailed this month and the 4-H program has been very active. I understand that it's calving time now!

5)...and the Delano property? Approximately 11 acres of the 19.5 acres of the Delano Farm are deeded to the Water Department for wellfield protection. Two acres have been set aside for community housing; the Delano house is being renovated and the group home is currently being constructed. These units will be counted toward Duxbury's affordable housing goal.

6) The decision last year to use CPC funds for school turf fields provoked some strong opinions on both sides. In hindsight, do you still believe your decision was the right call? What happens to the CPC funds if only one of the turf fields is constructed? Last year's annual town meeting vote was for the appropriation of \$500,000 for the purpose of site work and drainage improvements for two synthetic athletic fields. There are no constraints as to how this money is distributed, either for one field or two. What is most important is that PRIDE, the citizens group spearheading this project, is responsible for raising \$2.00 for every \$1.00 of CPA funds spent.

7) David Hines, one of the original CPA supporters, wrote a commentary last year questioning the direction of your committee and its funding decisions. Were these criticisms warranted? If so, what has been done to address them? We (the CPC) always appreciate comments and suggestions from Duxbury residents. David Hines and other CPA advocates questioned our process of evaluating CPA applications in light of the synthetic fields. In response the CPC has developed a new set of criteria for evaluating every potential CPA project. The criteria are still in draft form and being tested on this year's applications.

8) How do things look for the state matching fee in the near future? The Community Preservation Coalition predicts that the state match for this coming fall will be roughly 65 percent.

9) What first sparked your own interest in conservation issues? Certainly my father, Dr. Lansing Bennett. I've been reviewing the volume of correspondence he had with landowners and the state during the 70s. It's remarkable! His foremost concern was the protection of our aquifer, our primary source of drinking water. He was also concerned with the protection of wildlife habitat, including coastal and inland wetlands, and the best means of protecting these resources was to purchase them. It was vital to him that he left a legacy to future generations. Working with him was an outstanding group of dedicated people who were witnessing the changes that had taken place in town when Route 3 was built. I would have loved to strategize with him.

Upon reading his notes, there is a message that repeats itself time and again. The cost of educating children (before state aid), capital expenditures, and municipal services exceeds what the average homeowner pays in taxes...In the long run, taking land out of development lessens the burden on the taxpayers and has the added benefit of improving the quality of life in Duxbury.

10) How many hours a week do you devote to CPC matters? I can't be specific. The committee is very busy throughout the year, reviewing new proposals and overseeing projects that may take years to complete. Joe Grady plays a key role keeping us informed. After the Oct. 15 deadline for proposals, our work ramps up considerably. As we approach town meeting we are meeting with the selectmen, director of finance, Finance Committee, Fiscal Advisory, just to name a few. It's a constructive process; it feels as if we're taking final exams or defending a thesis over a stretch of many months.